

Partnerships work to preserve 160 acres

REPRESENTATIVES of the Game Commission, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International recently joined other local partners in celebrating two land acquisition projects that will result in the preservation of 160 acres next to SGL 170 in Cumberland and Perry counties.

"Today, we first recognize the successful transfer of the 79-acre Witmer tract to the Game Commission, following the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy's unprecedented pay-off of its mortgage one year earlier than anticipated," said Vern Ross, Game Commission executive director. "This accomplishment could not have occurred without the tremendous support of local conservation-minded residents, businesses and organizations."

In August 1999, on behalf of the Game Commission, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy purchased the Witmer tract at an estate auction for \$175,500. The Board of Game Commissioners authorized the agency to pay the Conservancy \$31,600, the maximum \$400 per acre the agency may pay for land out of the Game Fund. To cover the remainder of its loan, the Conservancy organized the Miller's Gap Project Campaign Committee and began a fundraising effort.

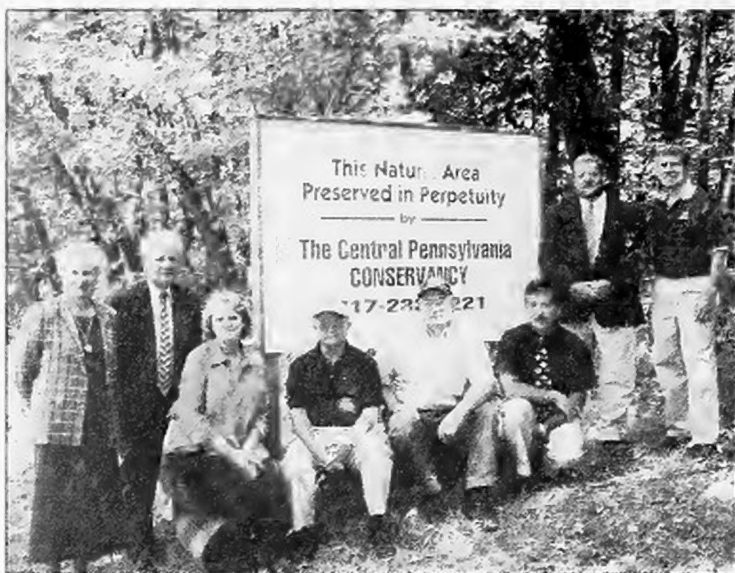
In less than a year, the Conservancy was able to pay off its loan and transfer ownership of the property to the Game

Commission. Among the major contributions to the project were: \$80,000 from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; \$13,000 from the state Department of Community and Economic Development, presented by Reps. Patricia Vance (R-Cumberland) and Allan Egolf (R-Perry); \$8,800 from the Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International; \$7,000 from the Pennsylvania chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation; \$5,200 from the Alexander M. Stewart, MD Foundation; \$5,000 from the Cumberland County Commissioners; \$5,000 from the Stony Creek Valley Coalition; \$2,600 from the Keystone Trails Asso-



Bob D'Angelo

BOB LIGHTNER, left, executor of the Lightner tract, with PGC Executive Director **VERN ROSS** as Central Pennsylvania Conservancy Chair **Carol Witzeman** looks on.



Bob D'Angelo

The Game Commission and Central Pennsylvania Conservancy joined other partners in celebrating two projects that will preserve 160 acres in Cumberland and Perry counties. Pictured, L to R, are Representative PAT VANCE (Cumberland Co.); VERN ROSS, PGC executive director; JUDI STACK, Stony Creek Valley Coalition; DR. TOM PAPOUTSIS, Blue Mt. Chapter SCI; DON HECKMAN, PA NWTF; KEN ELLENBERGER, Susquehanna River Waterfowlers; STEPHEN MOHR, PGC Commissioner; and Representative ALLAN EGOLF (Perry County).

ciation; \$1,630 from the Appalachian Audubon Society; \$1,500 from the Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club; \$1,000 from the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association and its Wetlands Trust affiliate; \$1,000 from the Penn Cumberland Garden Club; \$1,000 from Texas Eastern Gas Transmission Company; \$1,000 from Ramsey Koury; and contributions from more than 230 other individuals businesses and organizations.

Ross noted that the success of the Witmer tract effort helped pave the way to the second project involving the Lightner tract.

"We also join together to kick off the fundraising effort to purchase the nearby 80-acre tract from the Lightner family," Ross said. "The ultimate goal is to transfer this parcel to the Game Commission as well.

"What is critically important in relation to this parcel is that it had been subdivided and planned for development. But, thanks to the willingness of the Lightner family, we now will be able to save it for wildlife and outdoor recreation."

For this purchase, the Conservancy already has lined up several financial partners, including: \$6,000 from the Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International; \$5,000 from the Alfred and Helen Buck Trust Fund; \$5,000 from the Stony Creek Valley Coalition; \$3,000 from the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation; and \$2,000 from the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association and its Wetlands Trust affiliate.

"While there are many people we need to thank, I certainly want to highlight Carol Witzeman, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy president, and Bob Dunn, Blue Mountain Chapter of Safari Club International board member, for their outstanding efforts to spearhead the Miller's Gap Project Campaign Committee," Ross said. "On behalf of Pennsylvania's hunters and trappers, I thank you both for your dedication and commitment."

The Miller's Gap Project Campaign Committee will purchase the Lightner tract, which borders the Appalachian Trail, with a loan from the First Bank of Marysville. Now part of SGL 170, the Witmer tract is part of the Darlington Trail.

As these properties are within a few minutes of downtown Harrisburg and Carlisle, both events signify the success and ongoing concerted local efforts to preserve open space and com-

bat suburban/urban sprawl.

Both properties are on or near the summit of Blue Mountain and are part of the Kittatinny Ridge, which is a prime hiking area and is considered by

Audubon-Pennsylvania to be an Important Bird Area critical to migratory and non-migratory birds. SGL 170 currently is comprised of nearly 9,100 acres.

The first fight to "Save Stony Creek Valley" from the utilities and the game commission was long over.

Many donations to the Stony Creek Valley Coalition (SCVC) were received during the fight.

This is an example of how the war chest was dispersed.

Instead of fighting with the commission, SCVC was contributing funds to the Central Pa Conservancy to help the Pa Game Commission acquire land.

What a difference 20 years can make.